

## THE UNKNOWN WAYS OF LOVE

### NO. 1293

A SERMON  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you  
know not now; but you shall know hereafter.”  
John 13:7.*

THESE words of our Lord were spoken in answer to Peter's exclamation of surprise, “Lord, do You wash *my* feet?” It was a very natural expression of astonishment, and one which deserved no censure, but at the same time it was not a very wise remark, for although it was a marvelously condescending act for the Lord Jesus to wash His disciples' feet, He had already performed a greater condescension by coming upon the earth at all in the form of a *man*. For the Son of the Highest to dwell among mortals in a human body, capable of being girt about with a towel, and able to take a basin and pour water into it, is a far greater marvel than that He should, being a man, leave the supper table and act as a menial *servant* by washing His disciples' feet! Had Peter understood what his Master had prophesied and explained to him, namely, the Lord's approaching sufferings and death, he would have seen that for his Master to take a towel and basin was little compared with His having our iniquities laid upon Him, and being made a sacrifice for sin! It surprises you much to see the Lord of glory wear a towel—does it not amaze you still more to see Him clad in the purple robe of mockery? Are you not still more astonished to see His clothes stripped from Him, and to hear Him cry upon the cross, “I can see all My bones: they look and stare upon Me”? It is amazing that He should take the basin in the upper room, but surely it was more extraordinary that He should take the cup in the garden, and drink in its full bitterness till He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground! To wash the disciples' feet with water was certainly a surprising action, but to pour out His heart's blood to wash *us all* was by far the greater, for this involved His death, His making His grave with the wicked, and His being numbered with the transgressors! The expression of Peter is thus seen to be very natural, but not very profound. Dear brothers and sisters, do you not think it very likely that our pretty pious speeches, which strike us as very proper, and seem to our friends to be very commendable, will one of these days appear to be mere baby prattling, and do even now appear so to the Lord Jesus? Those choice sayings and holy sentences which we have read with admiration, and greatly valued; even those are not like the words of Jesus for solid intrinsic weight and worth, but may in other lights appear far less beautiful than they do now. I have myself proved in different humors and frames of mind that the very things which struck me as being so very deep and gracious have at other times appeared to be one-sided, shallow, or questionable. We *know* in part, and *prophesy* in part; our highest attainments here are those of little children, and even for the close student, the deeply experienced Christian, the venerable man of years and the graciously anointed instructor of the churches, there is no room for boasting.

Note next, that our Savior answered Peter's speech in the words of the text which are as admirable for their tone as for their matter. Which should we admire the more in this reply, its meekness or its majesty? To Peter's ignorant simplicity how gentle He is! “What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.” And yet how royally He confronts Peter's objection, and how distinctly His majestic Personality puts down the too conspicuous individuality of Peter! “What I do *you* know not now.” How perfect the blending of the majesty and the meekness! Who shall tell which of the colors is better laid on? This is *always* the way of our Lord Jesus! You shall find, through life, beloved, that whenever Jesus Christ comes to rebuke you, He will do so powerfully but gently; He will speak as a friend, and as a king. You will feel both His love and His authority, and acknowledge the power of both His goodness and His greatness. His smile shall not make you presume, nor shall His royal glance cause you to tremble. You will find His left hand supporting you while in His right you see His imperial scepter. Blessed

Savior, are You more meek or more majestic? We cannot tell, but certainly to our hearts You are both kind and kingly, sweet and sovereign, gracious and glorious!

**I.** Let us now come to the words themselves. We have looked at the occasion of them, and at the manner of them, and we will now weigh their matter. The words themselves have suggested to me many thoughts, and among them, first, that **IN OUR LORD'S DOINGS THERE IS MUCH WHICH WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND**. Our text is not merely true about the washing of the feet, but it is true concerning all that our Lord does—"What I do you know not now." We may know the *external* part of what He does, or think we do, but there is more in His actions than any of us can conceive. The external is not all; there are wrapped up within the mercies which we perceive other and yet greater mercies as yet unknown to us. You traverse the soil of Canaan, drink of its rivers, and are refreshed by its corn and wine and oil, but the goodly land has hidden riches, its stones are iron, and out of its hills you may dig brass. The brooks of which you drink derive their coolest waters from springs which have tapped "the deep which lies under." If you know in some measure what Jesus does, the whole mystery is not altogether laid bare to your eyes; there are folds of His manifold grace which as yet are unopened. The work of Jesus is beyond you—it is lower than your fall, higher than your desire; it surpasses you and is altogether too high for you! You simply cannot attain to its measurement. Who can by searching find it out unto perfection?

Our lack of knowledge of the divine doings is a wide subject, and I shall not attempt to explore its boundaries, but shall restrain myself by the text. Brothers and sisters, there are many things that God does which we cannot understand now, and probably never shall. For instance, why did He permit evil, at first, and still tolerates it? To this inquiry the divine answer would be "What I do you know not." Leave that alone! It is our highest wisdom to be ignorant where God has not enlightened us; it is great folly to pretend to know when we do not; there lives not a man, nor ever *will* live a man, who has even an approximation to an understanding of the dread mystery of the existence of moral evil! The bottom of this abyss no mind can reach! He is foolhardy who ventures on the plunge. Leave this dread secret alone, you cannot endure the white heat which burns around it. Many a man has lost the eyes of his reason while trying to peer into this fiery furnace; what have you to do with that which God conceals from you? It is God's business, not yours! The thing was done before you were born, and He who permitted it can answer for Himself if He cares to do so. And, with regard to predestination—that God ordains all things, and has before His eyes the chart of everything that has been, is, or shall be is most true! But who knows the depths of foreknowledge and destiny? To sit down and pluck the eternal purposes to pieces, to question their justice and impugn their wisdom is both folly and audacity! Here the darkness thickens, and out of it comes forth the proclamation—"What I do you know not." The things which are revealed belong to us and to our children—but as to the unrevealed, if it is to the glory of God to conceal a thing, let it be concealed! Jesus has torn the veil of the holy place, and into the secret of divine love you may now freely enter, but other veils which He tears not, you may not touch. Some truths of God are closed up from our understanding even as the ark of the covenant was shut against prying eyes. Let us not violate their sanctity lest we meet the doom of the men of Bethshemesh, but let us zealously guard them as priceless treasures that we may obtain the blessing which rested upon the house of Obededom. The same remark applies to the great designs of God in providence. He is pleased in prophecy to tell us what He has meant by His providence, and perhaps it will be one of the enjoyments of the future state to see the hand of God in the whole current of history, but while incidents are occurring we must not expect to understand their drift and bearing. The wonderful tapestry of human history, all woven in the loom of God's infinite wisdom, will astonish both men and angels when it is complete; but while it is yet unfinished it will not be possible for us to imagine the completed pattern. From between those wheels of providence, which are full of eyes, I hear a voice which says, "What I do you know not now."

So we will confine ourselves to the loving acts of the Lord Jesus Christ, since what the Lord was doing with Peter was not very mysterious, nor a deed of transcendent power, nor of stern justice. He was humbly girding Himself with a towel and pouring water into a basin to wash his followers' feet. It was a very simple matter, and evidently a very gracious, kind, and condescending act; but yet, even concerning that, Jesus said, "What I do you know not now."

My brothers and sisters, even the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ in His loving condescension we do not fully understand. Ah, think a minute—how can we? Does not our Lord's love always surpass our knowledge, since He Himself is the greatest of all mysteries? Let me read these words to you—"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." Do you understand the higher and the lower points of this transaction? You must comprehend them *both* before you can see what He has done! "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands." Can you see the glory of this? Jesus our Lord was conscious that His Father had made Him Head over all things to His church, and that He had laid the government upon His shoulders, and given Him the key of David that He might open, and no man shut, and shut, and no man open. He knew assuredly that at His belt swung the keys of heaven and death and hell, and that having fulfilled the commission of the Eternal God He was about to return to His throne. Have you grasped the idea? Do you perceive the glory of which Jesus was conscious? If you have done so, then descend by one long sweep—He, this Lord of all, having all things in His hands, takes off His garments, foregoes the common dress of an ordinary man, and places Himself in the undress of a servant, and He wears a towel that He may wait upon His own disciples! Can you follow Him from such a height to such a depth? A superior in the East never washes an inferior's feet—Christ acts as if He were *inferior* to His friends! He acts as if He were inferior to those poor *fishermen*; those foolish scholars who learned so slowly, and with whom He had spent so much time, and yet they did not know Him—those 12 men who soon forgot what they knew, and needed Him to explain again and again, line upon line, and precept upon precept! Having loved them to the end, He stoops to the extreme of stooping, and bows at their feet to cleanse their defilement! Who, I say, can compute the depth of *this* descent? You cannot know what Christ has done for you because you cannot conceive how high He is by Nature; neither can you guess how low He stooped in His humiliation and death. With an eagle's wing you could not soar so high as to behold Him as God over all, blessed forever, sitting at the right hand of the Father, the adored of cherubim and seraphim! Nor could you dive, even if you dared to take a plunge into the abyss, until you reached the depth of, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" And yet you must *somehow* know the interval, I was about to say the infinity, between these two points of height and depth before you can know what Jesus has done for you.

Moreover, think awhile. Was anything that Jesus did understood while He was doing it? He is born a baby in Bethlehem, but who knew what He did in the manger? A few shepherds, and two or three favored saints discerned the Savior in the baby, but to the mass of mankind He was unknown. God came on earth, and angels sung His advent, but O earth, your Lord might have said to you, "What I do you know not now." He lived here the life of a carpenter's son—that life was the most august event in all human history, but men knew not what it was or what it meant. "The world knew Him not." He came forward to preach the gospel—did they know who it was that spoke as never man spoke? Did they comprehend what He spoke? Ah, no, for He was hid from their eyes! At last He laid aside the life He had so strangely taken—who knew the reason of His death upon the cross? Did even His disciples know, though He had told them? When the earth shook, and graves were opened by His last cry, did even His own followers understand what a sacrifice had been offered? No, and until the Spirit was poured upon them from on high they did not comprehend that it behooved Christ to suffer. He could say to each of His own disciples, of all that He had done, "What I do you know not now."

This is true too of every separate gift which our Lord's love has given to His people. You have been justified in Jesus Christ, but do you fully know the wondrous righteousness with which justification by faith has endowed you? You are accepted in the beloved, but did any one of you ever realize what it is to have full acceptance with the Father? I know you have realized the fact, and rejoiced in it, but have you *known*, yes, *can* you know the full sweetness of its meaning? You are one with Christ, and members of His body; do you comprehend that? You are joint heirs with Christ! Do you know the full significance of that? He is betrothed to you in an everlasting marriage! Do you know what that means? Ah no, these wonders of His love, we hear of them, and we believe them, but, "What I do," He said, "You know not now."

Our Lord is doing great things by way of preparing us for a higher state of existence! We shall soon be rid of this vile body, and be released from this narrow world; we are going to a sphere more suited for our heaven-born life where we shall be the comrades of angels, and commune with the spirits of the just made perfect—and serve the Lord day and night in His temple. But what glory shall be, we do not know, for the ear has not heard it, nor the eye beheld it, nor the heart conceived it. As for the preparations which are going on within us to make us ready for this sublime condition, we know that they are being carried on, but we cannot as yet see their course, their separate tendencies, and their ultimate issues. The instrument does not comprehend the tuner! The tuner fetches harsh sounds from those disordered strings, but all those jarring notes are necessary to the harmonious condition which He is aiming to produce; if the discords were not discovered, the music of the future would be marred. My brothers and sisters, concerning *all* that Christ has done it is true, “What I do you know not now.” Oh, if His work were little we could measure it! If His love were scanty we could know it! If His wisdom were finite we could judge it! But where everything is past finding out, who can pretend to know? Remember, that in our salvation Christ Himself is the sum and substance. In it every attribute of His divinity is brought into exercise to the fullest, He makes it His glory, counting our salvation to be His coronet and crown jewels; and therefore it is not at all marvelous that we should not know what He does.

**II.** Our second thought is a sweet one. OUR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING DOES NOT PREVENT THE EFFICACY OF OUR LORD’S WORK. “What I do you know not now.” Peter does not know what Christ is doing when He washes his feet, but the Master washes them just as clean whether Peter understands it or not. Jesus did not say, “There, Peter, you do not understand what I am doing by washing your feet, and so I shall not wash them until you do.” No, no; He moves on with the basin and towel, and washes them clean, though Peter does not know why. Is not this a great mercy, brothers and sisters, that the blessings which Christ bestows upon us are not dependent for their efficacy upon our capacity to understand them? Just look out a little in the world and see how true this is. A mother has her little child on her lap, and she is washing its face; the child does not like the water, and it cries. Ah, Baby, if you could understand it you would smile! The child cries and struggles in the mother’s arms, but it is washed all the same—the mother waits not for the child to know what she is doing, but completes her work of love. So is the Lord often exercising divine acts upon us, and we do not appreciate them, neither are we pleased; perhaps we even strive against His work of love, but for all that, He perseveres and turns not away His hand because of our crying. Does the tree understand pruning? Does the land comprehend plowing? Yet pruning and plowing produce their good results! The physician stands at the bedside of the patient and gives him medicine, medicine which is unpalatable, and which in its operation causes the patient to feel worse than he was before. The sufferer cannot understand this, and therefore he draws unhappy conclusions. But the power of the medicine does not depend upon the patient’s understanding its qualities, and therefore it will do him good, though it puzzles him by its strange manner of working. If a fool eats his dinner, it will satisfy his hunger as much as if he were a philosopher and understood the processes of digestion! This is a great mercy of God, for the most of men can never become philosophers! It is not necessary for a man to be learned in the nature of combustion in order to be warmed by the fire. A man may be ignorant of the laws of light, and yet be able to see. He may know nothing of acoustics, and yet be quick of hearing. A passenger, who does not know a valve from a wheel, enters a carriage at the station, and he will be drawn to his journey’s end by the engine as well as if he were learned in mechanics. It is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world. The efficacy of spiritual forces does not depend upon our capacity to understand them. I have mentioned this very simple fact because it really is necessary for us to remember it. We know so much, or think we do; we think it so essential that we should form a judgment of what the Lord is doing.

Ah, dear brothers and sisters, there are more essential things than this! It is better to trust, to submit, to obey, to love, than to know. Let the Lord alone; He is doing rightly enough, be sure of that. Is He to be questioned and questioned again by *us*? Are *we* to judge His judgment? Dare we demand answers to our impertinent inquiries, and say, why this and why that, and why the other? Were He a God if He would submit to such examination? If we call ourselves His disciples, how can we justify a spirit which would arraign our Lord? Be still and know that He is God! What more would you know? Remember that the things which you understand are for your good, but they can only bring you a small amount of bene-



fit because they must be in themselves small, or you would not be able to measure them. When a great, deep good is coming to you, you will not be able to comprehend it, for your comprehension is narrow: yet it will be none the less but all the more a blessing because you know it not! Joseph is gone, and here is his bloody coat. “Without doubt he is torn in pieces! All these things are against me! Ah, how my heart is broken with the loss of my darling child; I cannot understand it; it cannot be right.” So talks poor Jacob, but it *was* right, all the same for that! Joseph was on the sure road to Pharaoh’s throne, and to providing for his brethren in the land of Egypt. So it is with you, my brothers and sisters, under your present trial and affliction; you cannot understand it now, but that does not make a pennyworth of difference! It is working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Be content to let faith rule, and knowledge wait, and what you know not now you shall know hereafter.

**III.** A third thought is that OUR NOT BEING ABLE TO KNOW WHAT THE LORD DOES SHOULD NEVER SHAKE OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM. I hope, dear brothers and sisters, our faith in Christ does not rest upon our capacity to *understand* what He does! If so, I fear it is not faith at all, but a mere exercise of self-conceited carnal reason. Some things which the Lord has done bear upon their very forefront the impression of His infinite love, but I hope you know enough of Him now to be able to believe that where there are no traces of His love apparent to you, His love is as surely there. I rejoice in that part of my text which runs thus, “What *I* do.” This washing of the feet was not being done by Bartholomew, or Nathanael—it was the personal act of the Lord Himself. Now, when the Master and Lord is doing it, who needs to raise a question or to suggest an inquiry? It must be right if He does it—to question His conduct would be an insult to His majestic love. Do you know Christ? Then you know the character of His deeds. Do you know your Lord? Then you are sure that He will never act unkindly, unbecomingly, or unwisely. He can never send a needless sorrow, or wantonly cause a tear to flow. Can He? Here, then, is the question, not—why is it done?—but, who is doing it? And if the Lord is doing it, we can have no doubt about the excellence of His design! We believe that He is right when we cannot see that He is right. If we do not trust Him far beyond what we know, it will show that our confidence in Him is very limited. When a person only obeys another because he chooses to obey, and sees it a proper thing to do, he has not the spirit of implicit obedience at all; and when a person only confides in another as far as he can see that he is safe, he is a stranger to implicit confidence. Confidence has its sphere beyond the boundaries of knowledge; where judgment ceases, faith begins. “What I do you know not now.” Ah, most beloved of our souls, You spoke the truth in that, but we can reply to You that we know and are sure that what You do is supremely good!

**IV.** Fourthly, OUR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AS TO WHAT OUR LORD DOES GENERALLY SHOWS ITSELF MOST IN DEFERENCE TO HIS PERSONAL DEALINGS WITH OURSELVES. “What I do you know not now” refers to His washing Peter’s feet. Brothers and sisters, if there is anything which we are not likely to understand thoroughly well it is that which has to do with *ourselves*. We are too close home to see clearly. In this case the looker-on sees more than the player. We generally form a better opinion of the character, position, and needs of another than we do concerning ourselves. It is said of Moses’ face that everyone saw it shine but one man—and that was Moses—for he could not see his own countenance. So also if a man’s face is black, it is black to everybody but himself—he does not see his own spots. We cannot form accurate estimates of ourselves, and so we must not expect when Christ is personally dealing with us, that we should be able to understand what He does to us. Besides, if the Lord is dealing with us in an afflicting way, we are generally in an unfavorable state of mind for forming any judgment at all, being, as a rule, too disturbed in mind by the affliction itself. When a hospital patient is under the knife, he is a poor judge of the necessity of the operation or the skill of the surgeon. Later, when the wound has healed, he will judge better than he can do when the knife is just cutting through nerve, and sinew, and bone. Judge nothing before the time! You are not in a condition to judge, and therefore do not attempt it. When you are smarting under the rod, your opinions, estimates, and forecasts are about as much to be depended upon as the whistling of the wind or the dashing of the waves. Cease from judging, calculating, and foreboding—believe that He who ordains our lot orders all things in kindness and wisdom!

I do not wonder that Peter was puzzled and could not understand his Lord’s procedure, for it is always a hard thing for an active and energetic mind to see the wisdom of being compelled to do nothing!

Here is a man who can drag a net to the shore full of big fishes, and instead of using his strength, he is made to sit still and do nothing! Peter, the hardy, vigorous worker, must sit down like a gentleman, or a cripple, and do nothing! He does not understand; he has been very useful, and he thinks he could be useful now. He could at any rate wait at the table, or carry the basin, or wash his fellows' feet if it must be done. But he is bound to sit still and do nothing, and he does not understand it. Brothers and sisters, the hardest work a man has to do who wants to serve the Lord Jesus is to stand aside in forced inactivity, and take no share in what is going on! It is hard to be put on the shelf among the cracked crockery, and to be of no more use than a broken vessel while yet you feel you could be useful if you had but strength to leave your chamber. The proud idea that you have been wonderfully useful tempts you to repine at being laid among the lumber, and you feel it to be a very mysterious business altogether.

Then, what is worse, not only can Peter not do anything, he is a *receiver* from others, and must be waited on by them, and chiefly by his Master, whom he at other times loved to serve! To have his feet washed must have appeared to a hardy fisherman like Peter, a strange luxury. He would say, "Cannot I do it myself? I am not used to be waited on." To sit there, and, while doing nothing, to be also engrossing the care of another, must have been a unusual position to him. It is very unpleasant for an active man to be unable to work and to be dependent upon others for every little detail and necessity of life. To borrow other people's strength, and tax other people's care, is not desirable. To stand in need of anxious prayers, and to awake pitying thoughts, seems strange to those who have been accustomed to *do* rather than to suffer. "Why," you seem to say, "I have prayed for *them*! I have worked for them! Are they now to pray and work for me? I have fed the sheep; are the sheep going to feed me? I have washed the saints' feet; are they going to wash mine? Am I to be dependent upon others, and not be able to lend a hand or lift a finger"? Ah, well, we must not ask questions, but we are very apt to do so. We do not know, and we become inquisitive, but the Savior says, "What I do you know not now."

All the while there is very prominent in our minds a sense of insignificance and unworthiness which makes our receipt of favors the more perplexing. "What?" asks Peter, "I, unworthy Peter, shall I be washed by the Lord Jesus Christ"? So it seems to us unworthy sinners, "Why should God's people be thinking about *me*, and careful about *me*? Why has the Lord Himself deigned to make my bed in my sickness? Why has His blessed Spirit condescended to be *my* comforter, applying precious promises to me? Why all this to *me*?" We do not comprehend it; we are lost in wonder, and it is no marvel that we are.

Yet, dear brothers and sisters, if our eyes are opened, the Lord's afflicting dealings are not so wonderfully mysterious after all, for we need purging and cleansing even as Peter needed his feet washed. We greatly need the sacred purging of Jesus' love for the removal of daily defilement. Sometimes trials in business, sad bereavements, acts of ingratitude, pains of sickness, or depressions of spirit are just the basin and the water and the towel in which our Lord is washing our feet. We are clean through the blood of Jesus, but the daily cleansing we still need! It is a wonder that some of us are ever out of the furnace, for our dross is so abundant. I shall not be surprised if I find myself often under the flail, for the straw and the chaff are plentiful in me. Some metals are so apt to rust that it is no wonder that they are often burnished; some soils need a deal of plowing—they are very apt to cake and grow hard, and therefore must be broken up. So it is with us, there is a need for what the Lord is doing.

In Peter's case there was a need of fellowship, for our Lord said, "If I wash you not you have no part with Me." You cannot have fellowship with Christ unless He does this or that for you. No, especially unless He tries you, for how shall you know the suffering Savior unless you suffer yourself? Communion with the afflicted Redeemer is promoted by our personal afflictions. There was a need yet again for Peter and the rest to learn the lesson of washing their brothers' feet by seeing the Lord wash theirs. No man can rightly wash another's feet till his own feet have been washed by his Savior. It is in the kingdom of Christ a law that there must be *experience* before there can be expertness. You must be comforted or you cannot comfort; you must find His mercy yourself or you cannot lead others in the search; you must be washed or you cannot wash. Thus there were good reasons for our Lord's act, but they were not seen by Peter, nor do the motives for our Lord's dispensations towards us always appear upon the surface. When Jesus Himself is dealing with us, especially if it is in a way of *trial*, we do not understand it and He has need to say, "What I do you know not now."

V. Our last thought for the present is—UPON THIS POINT AND UPON MANY OTHERS WE SHALL ONE DAY BE INFORMED. “What I do you know not now, *but you shall know hereafter.*” That “hereafter” may be very soon. Peter knew within a few minutes what Jesus meant, for He said to him, “Know you what I have done unto you? If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another’s feet.” Thus the light was not long in breaking. Why are you in such a hurry when you are in trouble to begin spelling out an *evil* reason for God’s dealings, when, if you will but wait you shall know the right reason in a short time? A child is in an ill temper because there has been a rule made by the father and not explained, and so it sits down and sulks, and thinks of some unkind, ungenerous motive on the father’s part. In a minute or two after it understands it all, and has to eat its own words, it confesses, “How bad of me to impute such unkindness to my dear loving father who is always seeking my good.” If you will get reasoning in haste about your Lord’s dispensations, you will have to take all your reasoning back, and you will have to afflict your soul for being so hasty; therefore wait awhile, for “you shall know hereafter,” and that “hereafter” may be very near.

Peter understood his Master’s washing his feet better after his sad fall and threefold denial. I should not wonder that when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly, the penitent disciple said to himself, “Now I begin to see why my Lord washed my feet.” When he perceived how badly he needed washing, he would prize the token which his Lord had given him. He saw his own frailties and imperfections as he had not seen them before, for he had said, “Though all men should be offended, yet will I never be offended,” but after his sad denial he knew himself to be as apt to err as the rest of the brothers. At a certain point of your experience you will possibly discover the explanation of your present adversity. After the Lord had met with Peter at the sea and had said to him, “Feed My sheep,” and “Feed My lambs,” another method of explanation was open to him. When Peter began to be a pastor and to deal with the souls of others, he would clearly see why his Master washed his feet, for he would find that he had much to do of the same kind of service. Often does our work *for* Jesus unfold the work *of* Jesus, and we know our Lord by being called to follow in His footsteps.

Yonder in heaven, best of all, Peter understands why the Master washed his feet, and surely sometimes Peter must inwardly smile to think of what he once thought and said. Peter sings amid the heavenly throng, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” and then he thinks to himself, “In my folly in the days of my flesh I said to Him, ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ I loved Him when I said it, but what monstrous folly lay in my speech!” Ah, he understands it now, and we shall understand as he does soon! All things will be clear when we once pass into the region of light. I anticipate the blessed confidences of heaven! How blessed will be those familiar revelations of mysteries so long obscure! What sweet communications there will be between God and His people in the world to come! I look forward to the time when we shall see the knots untied, and the riddles all explained—then shall we see the good of apparent evil, and the life which lay in the bosom of death. Could we hear the stories of pilgrims who have reached home they would run like this—“I was traveling a pleasant road, blessing God for so delightful a pilgrimage, but suddenly a huge rock fell across my path, and I had with regret to turn back and traverse a more rugged road. I never understood why until I came home to heaven and now He tells me, ‘Child, there was a precipice but a little way in front, and you would have been dashed to pieces, and therefore I blocked up your way.’” Another who has reached the desired haven will tell us, “The vessel in which I sailed was wrecked; she struck upon a rock, and on a broken fragment of her timbers I swam to shore. I could never comprehend the reason for this calamity till now. Now I learn that the ship was being steered by evil hands to a shore where I would have been made a slave and kept in lifelong captivity, and there was no way of deliverance but by dashing the boat to shivers, and landing her passengers where they would be free.”

Brothers and sisters, you will, probably, bless God in heaven more for your sorrows than your joys! When you once ascend the celestial hills you will see that the best blessings came to you in the roughest garments; your pearls were found in oyster shells, and your jewels were brought out of Egypt. Sickness, trial, adversity, bereavement, and pain have been more truly angels of God to you than your wealth, your health, your strength, your comfort—infinitely more so than your laughter and your ease! O brothers and sisters, we shall know hereafter. Well, as we shall know hereafter, we may leave the knowing till then, and give all our attention now to obeying and trusting!

I have done when I have added a warning to those out of Christ. There are some in this congregation who do not know my Lord. I have been much exercised in my mind about you while I have been confined to my chamber, and unable to address you, and my prayer has been that the Holy Spirit would bless to your conversion the messages of my brothers who have kindly occupied this pulpit. If you still remain unconverted, I would like to say to you that you do not know what God has been doing with you, and you do not know what He is doing with you now; but you will know hereafter. You have Sabbath days, but you do not know their value; you will value them differently by-and-by when you lie dying, and especially when you are called before the judgment seat of God! You have your Bible, and you neglect it; you do not know that God has sent a love letter to you in that form; you will know it when you stand before His awful bar! Some of you have been pleaded with very often, and earnestly entreated to lay hold on eternal life; and the Lord has backed up our entreaties by sending sickness to you and personal trouble. Well, you have not known much about it, and you have not *wished* to know, but you will *have* to know hereafter! If you die without Christ, you will wake up in eternity and cry, “Ah me, that ever the Lord should call me and I refuse; that He should stretch out His hand and I should disregard.” In hell it will be an awful discovery, “I was the subject of gospel invitations, I was the object of earnest entreaties, but I continued in my sin, and here I am, eternally lost!”

What I earnestly desire should happen would be that you should this morning find out what the Lord has done for you, and should understand it, and should open your eyes and say, “Here am I, a man who has lived long in sin, and I have been spared on purpose that God might save me before I die.” Or perhaps it will take this form—“Here I am, a young man, and I came in here this morning with no precise motive, little knowing what God was about to do with me, but I know it now; He has brought me here that I may, this morning, believe in Jesus, and give my heart to Him!” O hearers of the gospel, if you once come to know what God has really done *with* you, and *for* you, you will hardly forgive yourselves for your conduct towards Him! You will say, “Did He really love me so, and redeem me with such a price, and have I been so unkind and thoughtless towards Him?” You will upbraid yourselves and chasten yourselves, and grieve to think you should have treated so good a friend so terribly! O may the divine Spirit this morning open your eyes to know what the Lord Jesus does for you, and His grace shall be magnified in you! Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 13:1-17.**

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